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CONSUMER TIME
CHRISTMAS GREENS

NETWORK: NBC

DATE: December 14, 1946

ORIGIN: WRC

TIME: 12:15--12:30 PM EST

(Produced by the United States Department of Agriculture
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CONSUMER TIME is restricted to network broadcast of the
program...presented for more than thirteen years in the
interest of consumers.)

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE....MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME !

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes, the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. And here are your inquiring consumers, Mrs. Freyman and Johnny.

5. JOHN: Our story today....Christmas greens.

6. FREYMAN: It's really more than one story...because we're going to tell all about Christmas trees, holly, and mistletoe.

7. JOHN: Well, let's start with the mistletoe first, Mrs. Freyman.

8. FREYMAN: And why mistletoe particularly?

9. JOHN: So we can work up to the bigger things.

10. FREYMAN: All right, Johnny. But to start the story of mistletoe at the beginning...we'd have to go back in time...way back.

11. MUSIC: KEEP IT UNDER

12. JOHN: Yes, back through history...back before the time of books...back to the time when news was told by word of mouth...when stories grew in the telling...and legends were born.

13. MUSIC: UP AND OUT

- 2 -
14. NARRATOR: (AS IF READING TO A CHILD) And in the Scandinavian countries, they tell the story of the goddess of love. Her son was struck to the ground by a dart of mistletoe... hurled by an evil spirit. Sorely did the mother grieve. Her tears became the white berries of the mistletoe. The gods, in their compassion, restored her son. And thus the happy and grateful goddess of love...grants a kiss to anyone who stands under the mistletoe. But remember, there is another old tale which limits the kisses to the number of berries on the bough.
15. JOHN: Well then Mrs. Freyman...I'd say, the trick is to hang mistletoe with plenty of berries. Although...who counts?
16. FREYMAN: (LAUGHING) Oh! Johnny. But seriously, I've heard that our custom of hanging mistletoe...comes down to us from the ancient Druids.. They considered the mistletoe sacred... and never let it touch the ground.
17. JOHN: Yes, I've heard that too. Well, whatever its origin, I think the mistletoe custom is here to stay, don't you?
18. FREYMAN: Very definitely.
19. JOHN: You know, the Forest Service people at the U. S. Department of Agriculture told me that the more mistletoe used for decoration at Christmas...the better off our trees would be.
20. FREYMAN: How do they figure that, Johnny?
21. JOHN: Well, mistletoe is a parasite. It steals the food from the trees it grows on. In fact it can actually kill the tree in time.
22. FREYMAN: Mistletoe generally grows on oaks, doesn't it?
23. JOHN: Mm hmm...oaks, cottonwoods, and hackberries, especially in the South. And on some of the cone-bearing trees in the Far West too.

24. FREYMAN: Then it seems to me, mistletoe has a dual personality...
it's both a prize and a pest.
25. JOHN: That just about sums up the story of mistletoe today.
26. FREYMAN: Okay...then let's go on to talk about Christmas greens.
27. JOHN: Ah...holly. Shiny green holly with red berries.
28. MUSIC: BACKGROUND
29. FREYMAN: And with many interesting stories about it...stories that
are older than the American trees which supply us with holly.
30. MUSIC: UP AND OUT
31. NARRATOR: In old Teutonic times...long ago...the people hung greens
in the house...to provide a protective home for the
woodland spirits during the harsh winter. Even now when
you hang holly on the door or in the windows...it is supposed
to keep away the evil spirits. And remember, 'tis said
that if the wife brings the Christmas holly into the house
first...she will rule the roost for the whole year.
32. FREYMAN: Well, Johnny that ought to be plenty of incentive for the
man of the house to rush out and get the holly early.
33. JOHN: Hmmm...maybe we'd better talk about other Christmas greens.
34. FREYMAN: All right...with the accent on Christmas decorations the
whole family can make at home.
35. JOHN: From what?
36. FREYMAN: From evergreen cuttings...wild berries...pine cones...nuts
...moss. And even wild dry grasses. and a little
imagination add up to attractive Christmas decorations.
37. JOHN: Well, Mrs. Freyman, I don't think it's a good idea to urge
people to go out and help themselves to whatever bushes or
branches strike their fancy. After all - bushes and trees
must belong to somebody.

38. FREYMAN: Why of course. I think everybody realizes that you first have to get permission and then you have to pick and choose your Christmas greens carefully. Haven't you heard that the beautiful American holly is pretty scarce in many places...just because of careless, destructive cutting?
39. JOHN: Sure...that's what made me think of it.
40. FREYMAN: Some States now have laws to protect the holly. And in the interests of conservation, when you buy holly wreaths and decorations you should find out if it was grown especially for market or cut under expert supervision.
41. JOHN: Good idea. But...now let's get back to homemade Christmas decorations. Incidentally...where can city folks get the stuff to make them?
42. FREYMAN: They can get them from dead trees in city parks...or trees or branches lying on the ground. That's good advice to follow in farm woodlands too.
43. JOHN: Do you know how to make Christmas wreaths at home, Mrs. Freyman?
44. FREYMAN: Yes...it's really quite easy...especially if you have a sharp knife and a pair of strong shears to cut the greens. The only other equipment you need is strong wire to act as a frame for the wreath...finer wire or thread to bind the greens to the frame.
45. JOHN: Wire isn't so easy to come by these days.
46. FREYMAN: Have you been up in your attic lately?
47. JOHN: Yes...why?
48. FREYMAN: Got any old picture frames stored up there?
49. JOHN: And how...you should see some of those ugly looking people in the pictures too...but what's all this got to do with Christmas wreaths?

50. FREYMAN: You probably can find plenty of surplus wire on the backs of those picture frames but as I said strong thread will do.
51. JOHN: Swell idea.
52. FREYMAN: Now, just a few more tips about wreaths...and then I want to talk about my favorite homemade decoration ... a miniature Yule log.
53. JOHN: What else do you want to say about wreaths?
54. FREYMAN: Just to remember to fasten on your pine cones, berries... or bells...or any other decorations after the wreath is made. It's easier.
55. JOHN: With wire?
56. FREYMAN: With wire or thread.
57. JOHN: Now, what's all this about a miniature Yule log?
58. FREYMAN: Well, Johnny, you knew what a Yule log is, don't you?
59. JOHN: Sure...a huge log that burnt in the fire place every Christmas.
60. MUSIC (BACKGROUND)
61. FREYMAN: It's a Christmas custom with many variations in many lands.. an old old...custom.
62. MUSIC: UP AND OUT
63. NARRATOR: And the ancient Druids had a feast at the end of the year when the shortest days of the winter had passed. A great Yule log was ceremoniously chosen...and blessed. By order of the Druid priests, a fire brand from the Yule log was saved to rekindle next year's log. And so...the Yule log was kept ever burning. And with it burned hatred...and misunderstanding. Thus its cheery blaze keeps alive the spirit of good fellowship the year long.

64. FREYMAN: And Johnny, the miniature Yule logs...used as table decorations can add another touch of the season spirit to the home.
65. JOHN: I think I know the kind you mean, Mrs. Freyman. It's a small log about two or three inches thick...
66. FREYMAN: Mmm hmm...and about a foot long.
67. JOHN: Holding a couple of red candles.
68. FREYMAN: And some evergreen or holly sprigs on top for decoration.
69. JOHN: I guess it wouldn't be so tough to make at that.
70. FREYMAN: 'Course not, Johnny. The hardest part is really making a hole for the candles a couple of inches from each end.
71. JOHN: Yes, but how do you keep the Yule log from tipping over?
72. FREYMAN: Just tack a couple of twigs on the bottom. They'll serve as supports.
73. JOHN: Well that should make a mighty pretty centerpiece for the Christmas table...
74. FREYMAN: Or you can put it on your window sills.
75. JOHN: I think I'll give it a try this year. But now, Mrs. Freyman don't you think we ought to start talking about the Christmas tree itself?
76. FREYMAN: Yes, we'd better...because there's lots to say about it.
77. JOHN: One of the first things I want is some pointers on which tree keeps its needles the longest.
78. FREYMAN: Well, the balsam seems to keep its lustrous dark green needles longer than other evergreens...even in a warm room. But there's a very simple way to keep the needles on any Christmas tree from drying out and discoloring.
79. JOHN: Well, if it's simple, let's hear about it.

80. FREYMAN: All you do is make a fresh cut at the bottom of your Christmas tree and let it stand in a container of water. According to the Forest Service...that's a practical, satisfactory, and convenient method of fireproofing the tree.
81. JOHN: You beat me to it...I was just going to ask you about fireproofing.
82. FREYMAN: Well, doesn't that sound like an easy way?
83. JOHN: Sure does. And I'm all for it...especially if it keeps the needles from drying out...
84. FREYMAN: Which is when they become flammable. And it's a good idea to buy a tree that has been cut as recently as possible. But if you have to buy it in advance, remember the cold tends to keep the tree from drying out...so keep it outdoors...or in the garage.
85. JOHN: What if you want to hide the tree from the children until after it's all trimmed?
86. FREYMAN: Well, you can cover it with a canvas in the garage. It won't hurt the tree. And now as long as we're on the subject of safety and Christmas trees...I have a few more suggestions.
87. JOHN: Well good. The holidays won't be very joyous if serious accidents upset the plans.
88. FREYMAN: That's right. And the Christmas season does seem to bring a great many home fires...mostly because of the tree.
89. JOHN: I know one thing that should be checked...and that's the wiring for the Christmas lights...to make sure it's not defective.

90. FREYMAN: Another thing is, if you must use lighted candles...be very careful to keep them away from the tree...the window curtains and flammable decorations.
91. JOHN: How about watching out for big piles of Christmas wrapping paper...that might be touched off by a spark from a cigarette or the fireplace.
92. FREYMAN: Mmm hrm...those are all things to watch...so you won't take the "merry" out of Christmas this year.
93. JOHN: That would be tragic...because I can't picture Christmas as being anything but gay...with the glistening tree and the presents. After all that tree has been a symbol of good fellowship for so many years now.
94. MUSIC: BACKGROUND
95. FREYMAN: Yes...the custom of bringing trees into the house is an ancient one. I was surprised to learn just how old it is.
96. MUSIC: UP AND OUT
97. NARRATOR: Long before the Christmas era...sun god worshippers associated trees with sacredness. The people of Egypt celebrated the shortest day of the year by bringing green date palms into their houses...as a symbol of life triumphant over death. When the Romans first observed the feast of Saturn...they raised aloft a bough of evergreen. The Druids believed green boughs in the house meant eternal life.
98. FREYMAN: Those are some of the things we know definitely people associated with trees in the past. But how the Christmas tree came to be decorated as we know it today...that's another story...and another and another.

99. NARRATOR: One story tells of a man who walked alone one Christmas Eve...alone with the snow and many many friendly stars. He was enchanted with the night. What a shame to return to the house and leave all the beauty outside. So he cut a small snow-laden fir tree...and set it up in the living room /for the children...with many small candles...like the stars of heaven. Some say this was the first Christmas tree. The name of the man...Martin Luther.
100. FREYMAN: Whether the credit goes to Martin Luther or not...we do know that decorating Christmas trees was first popular in Germany several hundred years ago.
101. JOHN: And the Christmas tree is still popular today...to put it mildly...at least until Twelfth Night.
102. FREYMAN: Twelfth Night?
103. JOHN: Sure...isn't that when most people take down their tree?
104. FREYMAN: I guess it is. But before you take down that tree, Johnny, I have a few suggestions to make.
105. JOHN: Well, you can postpone taking down any Christmas tree as long as you want, Mrs. Freyman...because I can't think of anything more forlorn-looking than an old Christmas tree standing in an ash can...with all its glories forgotten.
106. FREYMAN: That's just the point. So why not make a more useful end of the Christmas tree?
107. JOHN: Why not? But how?
108. FREYMAN: Well, I have some neighbors who set their old Christmas tree up outside as a shelter and feeding station for birds.
109. JOHN: Say...that is a thought.

110. FREYMAN: They wired the lower branches to the ground to keep the wind from knocking over the tree. And then they tied suet, raisins, and little bags of seed onto the branches. They had a great collection of birds there all winter... especially when the snow was deep and the birds had trouble finding any food on the ground.
111. JOHN: Speaking of garden...you could use the branches of the Christmas tree to protect some of the perennial plants that are sleeping out the winter.
112. FREYMAN: Good idea.
113. JOHN: You know, there are really more uses for old Christmas trees than I thought at first.
114. FREYMAN: Hold on...here's one more. Some people gather needles that fall from the tree...
115. JOHN: And stuff a pillow with them?
116. FREYMAN: No...they sprinkle them on slippery sidewalks.
117. JOHN: I heard about a couple of boys once who had a Rocky Mountain goat for a pet. And every January they hired him out to people who wanted their old Christmas trees... eaten...to say nothing of wreaths, wrapping paper...
118. FREYMAN: Now, Johnny, don't you think that's kind of wasteful... after all the good uses we discussed for your old Christmas tree?
119. JOHN: Well a goat has to eat, doesn't he?
120. FREYMAN: Well, I still think it's wasteful. And that word wasteful brings up the question of whether our custom of cutting trees for Christmas every year is wasteful.
121. JOHN: It's interesting you should bring that up...because that's one of the questions I discussed with the Forest Service people.

122. FREYMAN: What did they have to say on the subject?
123. JOHN: Well, they pointed out that conservation means wise use...
and what better use could you find for trees than
contributing so much joy to a troubled world once a year.
124. FREYMAN: I'll go along with that.
125. JOHN: But when you get right down to a dollar and cents approach
...it isn't wasteful. The proper cutting of Christmas
trees can actually improve a forest.
126. FREYMAN: That's good news...but I wish you'd explain how.
127. JOHN: Well, good healthy forests require thinning out regularly
...so that the trees will have plenty of room to grow...
and plenty of air and sun. So why not sell the trees
that have to be removed as Christmas trees?
128. FREYMAN: I don't see any reason why not.
129. JOHN: Neither does Uncle Sam...and he's definitely in the
Christmas tree business.
130. FREYMAN: You mean many of our Christmas trees come from the
National Forests?
131. JOHN: That's right...about six hundred thousand of them a year.
And not because Uncle Sam wants to play Santa Claus...
remember...but because he's trying to keep these public
forests in good trim.
132. FREYMAN: Now that I think about it, it seems to me, that our
Christmas tree last year came from a National Forest.
It had some kind of tag or something on it.
133. JOHN: It was probably a tag. Here's one I brought along to
show you. The Forest Service people gave it to me.

134. FREYMAN: That's it. It says "This tree was cut from the Kootenia (Coot-ly-nay)...National Forest under the direction of the United States Forest Service for the improvement of the forest stand." Only last year I think our tree came from the White Mountain National Forest.
135. JOHN: And see on the back of the tag it says..."The prevention of forest fires through the past years has made possible this tree to decorate your home on Christmas Day."
136. FREYMAN: Well anybody who finds that tag on a Christmas tree can be sure the tree was cut properly.
137. JOHN: Of course you won't see that tag on all the Christmas trees on the market. But that doesn't mean that the others weren't cut carefully. Some States have certificates of properly cut trees...
138. FREYMAN: Anyway, you've answered the question of whether cutting Christmas trees is wasteful or not.
139. JOHN: And I think this will really emphasize it. The Forest Service points out that one big forest fire may destroy as many young trees as the entire country's Christmas tree trade in one year.
140. NARRATOR: So Santa Claus and forestry can still remain on friendly terms. And with a clear conscience at Christmas time we can enjoy our trees and decorations...the proudest gifts of our forests.
141. MUSIC: BRIEF CLOSING
142. JOHN: And now, Mrs. Freyman, what have you got lined up for next week's program? Next Saturday will be only four days before Christmas, you know.

143. FREYMAN: Don't worry, I haven't forgotten. And next Saturday we're going to have a special Christmas program with some very special guests...some girls that American servicemen met and married overseas.
144. JOHN: Will they tell us all about Christmas in their countries?
145. FREYMAN: Yes indeed...and I hope I can help them out with some marketing tips for their first Christmas dinner here in America.
146. JOHN: So friends, be sure to be with us next Saturday at the same time...for a special Christmas program on
147. SOUND: CASH REGISTER
148. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME
149. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER
150. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Eleanor Miller and directed by Frederick Schweikher is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C.
- Here's a reminder from your mailman. Christmas cards for local delivery should be in the mail not later than December fifteenth. Help get your cards on the way by tying them in a bundle with all the addresses facing the same way. And, incidentally, greeting cards of uniform size make a neater bundle and make it easier all around for everybody handling the mail.
- This is NBC, the National Broadcasting Company.

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